

KENT COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD

January 21, 2021

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Kent County Water Authority was held on the 21st day of January 2021, at 3:30 p.m. at the offices of the Authority in West Warwick, RI, in the Joseph D. Richard Board Room and via Zoom with the board members.

Chairman Robert Boyer opened the meeting at 3:30 p.m. Board members, Chairman Robert Boyer, Vice-Chairman Joseph Gallucci, Treasurer Russell Crossman, Brian Kortz, John Giusti and Geoffrey Rousselle were all in attendance along with Executive Director/Chief Engineer David L. Simmons, Legal Counsel Patrick J. Sullivan, Esq., Director of Administration John Duchesneau and Director of Human Resources and Finance Michael Lanfredi. Administrative Assistants Nicole Jaques and Nicole Campagnone were also in attendance.

Chairman Boyer led the group in the pledge of allegiance.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of the regular board meeting, held on December 17, 2020 were presented for approval. Mr. Rousselle moved, seconded by Mr. Crossman. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Guest Corey Buckner – Muni Link Utility Billing / CIS Update.

Mr. Simmons introduced Mr. Buckner. He said the new software was going live on Feb. 1, 2021. Mr. Buckner gave an overview of the new billing system and software. He said the website was built for KCWA. He illustrated a quick pay option for a single payment for our customers signed in as a guest. He went the create account screen and went through the login screen.

Mr. Simmons said customers can do archive billing and can reprint old bills. Mr. Buckner went on to discuss payment types, bank or credit card, and discussed the security of the site. Mr. Simmons reminded the board that all types of payment are now fee free.

Chairman Boyer asked how the customer knows this is an available option. Mr. Buckner said it was on the website, and a notice on the bill. Mr. Simmons said that they were creating a new bill and on the back it will direct the customer to go to the website. RI.gov will no longer be available and the customer will be directed to go to the website to pay. They also said there will be an insert in the next bill.

Legal Counsel

CONE Receivership

Mr. Sullivan updated the board on the Center of New England receivership. The case remains before the superior court. He said there were several decisions made by the judge dismissing all the appeals for being out of time and reassuring the settlement for the Highlands to continue to have the water infrastructure installed and the new lots developed.

RIDOT-Pipe Gantry Issue

Mr. Sullivan advised the board that this matter is going along well, from a legal standpoint. He advised the board that the RIDOT agreed to fund the damage to the gantry bridge and a plan was in place.

Mr. Simmons discussed the engineering aspects of the repair going forward. He said D'Ambra will be commencing the work on January 25th and that it may be done by mid-April.

QDC Wholesale Connection – Update - Agreement

Mr. Simmons updated the board on the Quonset Development Corporation project. He said the contract drafted by Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Shekarchi was with QDC. He said no major changes were foreseen. He said their board meeting will be on the 26th of January.

Director of Finance Report:

Closing Report December 2020 Cash Report

Mr. Lanfredi, Finance Director, explained and submitted the financial report. He reported on the Cash Receipts and Disbursements and Statement of Cash Location FY 2020-2021 as of December 2020 and Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balance as of December 2020, attached as exhibit "A", and a thorough discussion ensued with regard to the sales and revenue.

Mr. Rousselle moved, seconded by Mr. Gallucci, to accept the reports and attach the same as an exhibit and that the same be incorporated by reference and be made a part of these minutes.

Upon Motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously,

VOTED: That the Cash Receipts and Disbursements and Statement of Cash Location FY 2020-2021 as of December 2020 and Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balance as of December 2020, attached as exhibit "A", be approved as presented and be incorporated herein and are made a part hereof.

Chairman Boyer asked whether the collections were strong. Mr. Lanfredi said some payments were delayed but the customers were still paying.

2012 and 2017 Series A Bond Defeasance and Payoff Update

Mr. Lanfredi advised the board of the sequence of events that surround the payoff of the two bonds. He said the 2012 bond was defeased on January 15, 2021 with \$4.9 million in escrow to be paid by the trustee. He went on to say that the 2017 bond was paid in full, rendering KCWA bond free. The remaining funds in the formerly restricted accounts were in Washington Trust.

PUC/DPUC MATTERS:

COVID-19 Updates - Continuity of Operations -PUC Dockets 5026

Mr. Simmons updated the board on this topic. He shared his screed and showed participants and the public the flows during Covid and the reports that they send to the PUC. He discussed the impact model monthly. He showed November and December production was less than last year.

Meter and Billing Investigation Update

Mr. Simmons updated the board on the complaints and the investigation. He said as of January 21, 2021, there were 556 investigations requested, with 539 found the bill was correct, and 17 incorrect. These were clerical errors. He said of the 17, 3 were underbilled for usage and not overbilled. He said they were going to pull 500 random accounts to see if any of the manual key entries were made in error. He said of the unsatisfied customers, 127 appealed to DPUC. Of those 83 were completed and 44 were in process.

He went on to say Warwick Water have 475 similar complaints. He said other water utilities were also inundated with complaints. He said the primary cause was the drought and outdoor water use for irrigation and recreation.

Chairman Boyer commented and said Mr. Simmons and the remaining staff did a good job explaining the spike, blaming both Covid and the drought.

Mr. Simmons said with the new billing format with the specific usage period spelled out, historical use, alerting on continuous use, and clear visible accounting for meter replacements will be very helpful for the customers understanding their bills. He stated in regards to monthly billing, if there is a problem, it gets to the customer sooner, unlike now, where the customer doesn't know in a timely fashion. He also discussed that the meter readers are proactively engaging customers where high use flags are shown on the accounts.

Mr. Rousselle asked whether this dovetailed with the Rep. MacNamara resolution. He said Mr. Simmons answered all their questions. He asked Mr. Simmons if he could show this information to answer their questions. Mr. Simmons agreed, that anyone who wants to take a look at this, they are more than welcome.

Monthly Billing – Tariff Advice Filing and Petition for Relief to RIPUC

Mr. Simmons said the monthly billing has a cost to it. He said we will need PUC approval, but the testimony is being done now, and we should be able to get before the Commission in June or July. He discussed the phase in of the monthly billing and said everyone should be on monthly billing by October. It would begin with Coventry by the first week in August.

Meter Change Out Program – Update Status

Mr. Simmons introduced Ms. Campagnone to the board. She said that 61.1% of the meters have been installed, approximately 14,733 meters.

Point of Personal Privilege & Communication

Chairman Boyer commended Mr. Simmons and the office staff for their hard work during the criticism of KCWA. He said they had to tolerate the verbal abuse and still handled it well.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CHIEF ENGINEER'S REPORT

GENERAL:

New Water Bill Design for Launch in Early March

Mr. Simmons explained that KCWA would be changing its bill. He showed the board a draft of the new bill. He said it was designed in house, working with muni link. He went line by line explaining the new bill, explaining all points and detail, including a new water usage alert. He illustrated the full detail of historical usage.

Chairman Boyer said the bill should show that the rate was reduced. Mr. Simmons agreed and showed where that information was.

Mr. Giusti suggested that KCWA run the new bill by a public relations person for their opinion with perhaps different graphics or color. Mr. Simmons agreed, saying that all data should remain, though. Mr. Kortz thought it was important that the customer gets the same bill online or on paper.

RIDOH / EPA Approvals: Clean Water Inf. Plan, AWIA – R&R Plan & CCC Plan

Mr. Simmons said official approval was received by RIDOH for the Clean Water Infrastructure Plan. The Risk and Resiliency Plan needed by EPA for compliance with AWIA was also delivered and approved. He stated the annual Cross Connection Control Plan update required by RIDOH was sent to the agency and is being reviewed.

ONGOING PROJECTS:

IFR 2021 Update

Mr. Simmons said these bids were going out Monday. He showed the elements to the board, with projects in West Warwick, East Greenwich and Coventry. He went on to discuss the project. He estimated the cost of this to be in the area of \$10 million. Mr. Rousselle asked about the repaving requirements in these jobs. Mr. Simmons said the paving is curb to curb as KCWA has always done in the past which is also in conformance pursuant to the RI Utility Fair Share Roadway Repair Act. .

East Greenwich well Treatment Design – RIDOH

Mr. Simmons said this was still at RIDOH, and that it hasn't been approved yet.

Water Main North / South Interconnection High Service Update

Mr. Simmons said the timeline is all tied to the pipe gantry issue. He said the pipe would be live but for the DOT damaging the bridge.

LAND ACQUISITION – Progress Update

Due Diligence Progress Update

Mr. Kortz updated the board on the progress. He said they were in the 60-day due diligence period. He said the architect was making progress. He said he attended pre application meetings with West Greenwich officials. He said they received positive feedback. He said they were to meet with RIDEM soon and it may require a special meeting of the board.

Executive Session: Pursuant to RIGL Executive Session 42-46-5(a)(1) relating to discussions of the job performance, character, or physical or mental health of a person or persons.

The affected employee was asked whether or not they wished open session or executive session. The employee elected executive session.

Mr. Rousselle moved, seconded by Mr. Gallucci, to go into executive session.

Motion made and duly seconded, it was unanimously, by roll call vote

VOTED: That KCWA is authorized to enter Executive Session 42-46-5(a)(1) relating to discussions of the job performance, character, or physical or mental health of a person or persons.

At 4:50 p.m. the board emerges from Executive Session.

Mr. Sullivan then announced that a vote had been taken in executive session. He said the law requires the vote be immediately disclosed. He said the board had unanimously to pay Ms. Jaques the 198 hours of straight time as additional compensation as she is ineligible for overtime pay. The total was \$6,737.04.

There being no further business before this board, on motion duly made by Mr. Rousselle, seconded by Mr. Crossman and carried, the meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Dated: February _____, 2021

Patrick J. Sullivan
Legal Counsel